UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/1991/SR.12
5 December 1991

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 2 December 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALSTON
later: Mr. MUTERAHEJURU

CONTENTS

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (continued)

Sweden (continued)

Finland (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.91-18760/3999B

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (agenda item 7)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Sweden (E/1990/7/Add.2; E/C.12/WG/1991/CRP.6) (continued)

1. Mr. DANIELSSON (Sweden) said that approximately 31 per cent of Sweden's population received a vocationally oriented secondary education of up to two years after their compulsory nine-year primary education; 12 per cent received a three- or four-year academic secondary education and 21 per cent went on to college or university. In reply to question No. 8 of the list of issues (E/C.12/WG/1991/CRP.6), he said that approximately 90 per cent of young people in Sweden finished some kind of secondary education and in reply to question No. 5, that 52 per cent of those who received a secondary education were enrolled in academic courses while the remaining 48 per cent followed vocational programmes of from two to three years or less. In reply to question No. 12, concerning the rate of unemployment amongst youth in Sweden, he said that 5 per cent of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 not receiving secondary education were employed and 5 per cent unemployed.

2. In June 1991, Parliament had decided on major changes with regard to secondary education, which constituted a follow-up to the reform programme described in paragraph 21 of the report, on which question No. 13 requested further information. The changes were to be introduced successively over a four-year period, beginning on 1 July 1992. However, as a result of the change of Government in September 1991, it was still uncertain whether the reform programme would be amended, and if so to what extent. Accordingly, he would merely describe the main features of the programme, the first of which was the requirement for municipalities to offer all young people between 16 and 20 a place on one of the 16 different national secondary-education programmes; the programmes were mostly of a vocational nature. The three-year programmes comprised a compulsory core curriculum and the vocational component would be conducted in work places in the private and public sectors. The reform also featured individual vocational and academic programmes without any time-limit, for students who were not enrolled in any of the national programmes.

3. As to whether there were any serious regional disparities in the availability or accessibility of education, he said, in answer to question No. 16, that a new act which had come into force on 1 July 1991 made it compulsory for municipalities to bear the cost of transport for secondary students who lived more than 6 kilometres from school, as had long been the case of primary students. Thus it could hardly be said that there were any serious regional disparities in the availability or accessibility of either primary or secondary education.

4. Question No. 14 requested information on the percentage of the handicapped and disabled that attended special schools. Special schools for the physically handicapped existed at the secondary, as well as at the primary level, and since 1 January 1991 seriously disabled students unable to attend ordinary

secondary school had been entitled to specially designed secondary education at boarding school, until the age of 23. Most of the cost of the education, which was combined with special care and measures for rehabilitation, was borne by the State, although students had to pay for their own room and board at the three such establishments catering for 80 students, that existed in Sweden. In answer to question No. 15, on the difficulties, if any, encountered in the provision of fundamental education to immigrants and foreign workers who had received no such education in their countries of origin, he first of all pointed out that the majority of non-Nordic immigrants in Sweden were refugees and relatives of people already settled there and that they constituted a heterogeneous group which presented a problem for small municipalities when it came to arranging suitable education for them. Progress was also slowed down by the need to teach illiterate immigrants the basics of reading and writing in their own language, as part of the municipal education for adults mentioned in paragraph 28 of the report.

5. In reply to question No. 10 on the percentage of university students that did not receive full government grants, he informed the Committee that approximately 80 per cent of the total of 176,000 university college and university students had received State financial student support during the 1990-1991 school year while the remainder had chosen to finance their studies in some other way, such as by working part-time. Financial support for students ceased if they had a yearly income of over SKr 160,000, below which support was proportional to the student's income with a lower threshold of SKr 52,000. Some 6 to 7 per cent of students received reduced financial support. The support, which had to be applied for, consisted partly of a grant and partly of a soft loan from the State. In 1991, the level of the grant had been SKr 1,900 per month while the loan, which was not taken out by all students, had been SKr 4,500 per month.

6. Mr. Muterahejuru took the Chair.

7. Mr. KONATE thanked the Swedish delegation for its extremely detailed report and for the explanations it had provided, although he regretted that the replies given by the delegation at the morning meeting had left unanswered question No. 3 of the list of issues, regarding the action taken as a result of the cooperation and dialogue with the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts subsequent to the consideration of the initial report (E/1982/3/Add.2). The delegation had mentioned a number of reforms that had been implemented in the period between Sweden's initial report and its second periodic report (E/1990/7/Add.2). He would be interested to know whether the Committee's consideration of Sweden's reports had been instrumental in the adoption of those reforms, or whether they had been decided by the Swedish people and Government of their own accord. Regarding article 13 of the Covenant, the Committee had noted that authorizations to operate private primary schools were issued by the administration, although such was not the case of private secondary schools. He asked what criteria were applied by the authorities in issuing authorizations and whether there was any possibility of appeal against a refusal to issue an authorization.

8. The report mentioned cooperation between teachers, parents and students in respect of measures taken by the education authorities, and he asked at what level pupils were involved in taking the decisions and whether pupils from the age of seven played an active part, in accordance with the spirit of article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

9. Mr. ALVAREZ VITA expressed concern about the apparent absence in Swedish legislation of a provision, as required by the dualist system of Swedish law, to implement article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sweden was a party, and which prohibited any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred. Among the refugee students who received financial support from the Government of Sweden there were recognized terrorists committed to overthrowing lawfully constituted democracies, who thus received indirect support for their activities. He asked whether there was any form of restriction on the freedom of expression of refugee students who received financial support.

10. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that she would like more data on the situation of women in education, and in particular on the number of women teachers and students in higher education, together with details of any special programmes designed to train women for non-traditional activities. The representative of Sweden had mentioned special educational measures taken on behalf of the handicapped, and she asked whether Sweden had any experience of integrating handicapped persons into ordinary schools. She inquired whether drugs posed a problem in Sweden and whether any programmes had been implemented to combat the drug problem. Lastly, she asked whether Sweden made use of the experience of senior citizens in the educational field, and in particular whether retired teachers were given an opportunity to continue their involvement in academic life.

11. Mr. SPARSIS thanked the delegation of Sweden for its comprehensive and lucid presentation. His concern was with violations of the legal requirement for equal opportunities for men and women at work. That requirement was violated in many countries, and a large number of court cases relating to violation of the principle of equal opportunity were pending. The considerable time required to obtain redress through the courts meant that plaintiffs often gave up their case, and he asked for details of Sweden's experience in that area.

12. Mr. MRATCHKOV asked for details of teachers' salaries in Sweden, at the primary, secondary and university levels and inquired whether teachers were civil servants. He also asked the delegation to provide details of the collective bargaining agreements pertaining to teachers, for information on their conditions of retirement and any other information on their professional status.

13. Mr. RATTRAY thanked the delegation for clarifying the working of the Swedish educational system. He said however, that he had been unable to decide whether it had become easier or more difficult for marginal members of the population to accede to education since 1982. The second periodic report of Sweden mentioned some financial costs pertaining to education, and he asked

the delegation to clarify whether tuition at the secondary and university levels was free of charge. He also asked whether special consideration was given to the underprivileged and in particular whether handicapped persons of limited means were given financial support to pay for their room and board, which students apparently had to pay for themselves.

14. Mr. DANIELSSON (Sweden) presenting Sweden's reply to part III of the list of issues said, in reply to questions Nos. 17 and 18, that opportunities to take part in cultural life naturally varied in a country the size of Sweden and with a relatively small population. In 1974 Parliament had unanimously decided to promote the decentralization of decision-making and activities in the cultural sphere, as a result of which municipalities had become directly responsible for libraries and music schools and for subsidizing cultural activities as a whole. For their part, county councils were responsible for regional cultural institutions such as county theatres, museums, orchestras and bands and the Swedish State promoted decentralized cultural activities in all parts of the country, mostly through financial subsidies. The most important form of subsidy was support for regional cultural institutions such as the National Theatre Centre, the Institute for National Concerts and the National Exhibitions Service which operated throughout the country. Central cultural institutions also provided expertise and services in the form of touring exhibitions and through theatrical and operatic tours.

15. There were county libraries in all counties, and museums in all but 2 of the 24 counties. The number of county theatres had increased by 11 since 1974-1975, and 23 of them received State support. Four new theatres had been started in the north of Sweden in recent years and the Government subsidized 12 regional and local orchestras, 6 more than in 1973. Resources for regional music activities had been transferred from the Government to the county councils since 1988.

16. Responding to question No. 21 in the list of issues he drew attention to paragraphs 14 to 16 of the second report. Apart from Sami schools and integrated Sami education at ordinary primary schools, the Sami benefited from the financial cultural support available to all groups in Sweden. The Sami were regarded as an ethnic minority in Sweden but, as an indigenous population, enjoyed special status both with regard to the majority population and with regard to other minority groups, as a result of which there had been a special national budget allocation for subsidies to Sami culture since 1977. Decisions on the use of the allocation were taken by a special delegation, the Cultural Delegation of the Sami Fund, with a majority of Sami members. During the fiscal year 1991-1992, the delegation would be distributing just over Skr 6 million, mainly for support to various Sami organizations, Sami cultural projects and Sami research, but also for a special museum and a Sami theatre. There was now a Sami research institution in Norway which was financed in cooperation with the other Nordic Governments. The new Government was moreover planning to introduce a comprehensive bill concerning the Sami in 1992.

17. Regarding question No. 22 of the list of issues, concerning support for private scientific research and creative activities, he informed the Committee that, according to 1987 statistics, the private sector accounted for as much as 52 per cent of Swedish expenditure on research and development (Skr 30.5 billion or 3 per cent of gross domestic product). It should be

noted, however, that 80 per cent of company research and development was aimed at developing products and processes and only 13 per cent accounted for actual research, most of it applied research. In the university sector, the proportions were reversed. Unlike many other countries, there was a very strong belief in Sweden in the importance of integrating research into the university system as being mutually beneficial to higher education and to the development of research itself. That was particularly important in a small country with a limited capability for producing a large number of scientifically highly qualified and creative research environments. Sweden had therefore concentrated on channelling public resources to the university colleges and universities and to the research councils. Research and development was to a very large extent conducted by university colleges and universities.

18. Unlike private institutions, the university system was very much open to public control. Universities were generally public and free of charge for students. Freedom of research and academic independence in research were guaranteed by law under the Universities Act of 1977. The fund allocation system and the diversity of funding sources also promoted the independence of researchers. There were many links between the university colleges and universities, and industry. Under a specifically Swedish system of joint venture research institutes, the latter were jointly funded by business consortia and the State, roughly on a 50-50 basis; there were now some 30 such institutes. It should be added that there were no provisions to prevent anyone from conducting research privately or from establishing private research institutes.

19. With regard to the question in paragraph 20 of the list of issues, State support to the school system and universities amounted to Skr 52 billion. Approximately 13 per cent of the national budget was allocated to primary, secondary and higher education, including research and financial support to students. It should be remembered, however, that primary and secondary schools were to a large extent funded by municipalities and county councils with their own taxation and budgets. With regard to culture, government support for cultural activities, including the media, amounted to about Skr 2.9 billion or 0.7 per cent of the national budget.

20. The National Committee for the Revision of the Copyright Law referred to in paragraphs 45 and 46 of the report had now concluded its work and its final report had been circulated to the authorities concerned and interested organizations for comments. The Committee's suggestions for legislative change aimed mainly at strengthening the rights of authors, artists and photographers. The suggestions were currently being considered within the Ministry of Justice and a government bill with proposals for amendments to the relevant acts was expected in the course of 1992. A summary in English of the Committee's suggestions was available for Committee's members, as were a number of brochures of general interest.

21. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAM asked whether, in view of the considerable developments in the broadcasting media and their recognized impact on attitudes and values, especially among young people, there were any government controls or measures to monitor or regulate the audiovisual media, especially video and film.

22. Having noted the revision of copyright legislation and the reported legislative measures taken against the illicit production of sound and audiovisual recordings (para. 45), she asked whether the measures concerned foreign recordings as well. She would be glad to receive a copy of the summary of the suggestions of the National Committee for the Revision of the Copyright Law, as proposed by the Swedish representative.

23. Mr. KONATE, referring to article 15 of the Covenant, asked whether the underprivileged groups referred to in the initial report of Sweden (E/1982/3/Add.2) as being a major target of Swedish policy were the same as the minority groups, including the Sami and immigrants, referred to by the government representative. He also wished to know more about the Gypsy population and whether the Government had taken any steps to ease the marginalization they often suffered in European countries.

24. He had taken note of the decentralization of cultural activities, but wondered whether the reported 0.7 per cent of the national budget allocated to cultural activities, including the media, was sufficient to attain the objectives of the Covenant.

25. Mr. NENEMAN said that Sweden had commendably recognized that large cultural institutions such as national theatres or symphonic orchestras could not be entirely self-supporting, especially in a small country, and required government subsidies. He asked whether the aim of such subsidies was to make the activities they provided more affordable for the majority of the people or simply to maintain them. He was asking the question specifically with reference to his own country, where the system of subsidizing all cultural institutions and their staff, including performers, had been discontinued as being counter-productive, since the quality of service and performance had suffered from the lack of incentive. He asked how Sweden approached the problem so as not to fall into the same trap. There was clearly also a need to subsidize the local production of television material and films in a country with a language that was not widely used. Another pitfall in that connection related to the need to import foreign material, and he wished to know who selected the material and on what criteria. He also asked whether there was any government policy on subsidies to sport.

26. Was satellite television popular and what was its positive and negative impact in cultural terms? Finally, he asked whether there was any kind of cultural censorship in the form of objections by church bodies or cultural associations, for instance, to scenes of violence or other phenomena in the media.

27. Mr. SPARSIS referred to the fear expressed in some quarters that the transition to a free market economy in some Eastern European countries might have adverse repercussions on the satisfaction of human rights, especially the right to culture and education, and asked whether those events had had any such repercussions, even indirectly, on Swedish society and on the position of the Swedish Government in regard to culture and education.

28. Mr. FOFANA requested information on the number and percentage of pupils and students enrolled in secondary, vocational and higher education, and asked whether any special measures were taken to cater for exceptionally gifted students.

29. In connection with article 15, he asked whether there were any special educational institutions providing instruction in music, dance, dramatic art and sport. Finally, he would welcome any information about distance education.

30. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO, referring to paragraph 20 in the list of issues prepared by the pre-sessional working group (E/C.12/WG/1991/CRP.6) and specifically to the national budget for culture, asked whether there was any additional budget allocation for local bodies, since she agreed with Mr. Konate that the national budget for culture seemed rather small.

31. Did the Government provide special facilities for elderly people with low incomes to enjoy the cultural activities available for the population at large, such as specially priced film or theatre tickets? She wished to know whether the recent change of Government would have any impact on the allocation of resources and on the enjoyment of rights under the Covenant.

32. Mr. RATTRAY, drawing attention to the Swedish representative's statement that Sweden had become a multicultural society in which the number of residents born abroad had reached 700,000, asked what special measures, if any, the Government was taking or proposing to take to preserve the cultural identity of the various groups and to harmonize within a single framework the cultural diversity of what seemed to be the Sweden of the future.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that the Swedish delegation might wish to return on the following day to respond to the Committee's questions and comments.

34. Mr. Danielsson and Mr. Eriksson (Sweden) withdrew.

Finland (E/1990/7/Add.1) (continued)

35. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ketokoski and Ms. Pohjanvirta (Finland) took places at the Committee table.

36. Ms. KETOKOSKI (Finland), responding to questions on the reporting system, said that the new approach adopted by the Advisory Board on International Human Rights Affairs was intended to promote an open national debate and involved public hearings aimed at fostering awareness of human rights issues. Since 1990, the reports themselves had been published in Finnish and English, and were thus available to citizens and non-governmental organizations for appraisal. The recent practice was to hold a debate in the Advisory Board as a follow-up to consideration of the reports, before immediately embarking on the preparation of the next report.

37. In reply to Mr. Neneman's question about what was done in Finland to encourage people to participate in culture, she said that no encouragement was necessary if high-quality services such as libraries and theatres were

available free of charge. In such circumstances, people availed themselves of the opportunities provided. On average, every Finnish citizen visited a library 10 times each year.

38. In response to general questions about the Advisory Board on International Human Rights Affairs, she said that, as its name implied, the Board operated first and foremost in the international field, but was also active at national level, providing opinions and expertise. Some of its members were nominated by the political parties; others were experts from research institutions. One member was drawn from the Finnish section of Amnesty International, and another was a representative of the Finnish Red Cross. The Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman was also a member. Disabled or minority groups were not represented, but the Chairman of the Board was a member of Finland's Swedish-speaking minority. The Board also held seminars, disseminated information and organized research projects such as the one that had led to publication of the report on protection of persons belonging to national minorities. A second report, on prostitution, was to be published shortly.

39. Mr. Mratchkov had asked whether individuals could invoke the provisions of the Covenant in the courts. The entry into force of the Covenant had led to changes in the legal system during the 1980s. In practice, however, there had been few references to economic, social and cultural rights in the courts, perhaps because few of those rights could be enforced by means of individual court cases. Organs such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman, and processes such as political debates and the preparation of legislation, played a more significant role with regard to the promotion of those rights, and of the Covenant.

40. Mr. Rattray had asked how a regression in economic, social and cultural life could be prevented and application of those rights guaranteed in a situation where decentralization was the trend. It was true that Finland was faced with an economic crisis and rising unemployment, in which the positive achievements of the past were under threat. There was thus a need for a new solidarity between the haves and have-nots. The only solution to the problem of decentralization was to seek broader provision of information and broader understanding of the whole concept of economic, social and cultural rights, a task that was more easily accomplished under a centralized authority.

41. Regarding the traditional roles assigned to men and women by academic education, many traditionally male-dominated professions, such as the law and medicine, were now open to or even dominated by women. Despite those changes, however, the real division of power and income had not been influenced. A special Nordic project had been launched to promote a new division of labour between men and women, and to encourage boys and girls to ignore stereotypes when choosing occupations. However, the question of educational equality was inseparably linked to that of economic equality: real income differences between men and women still existed, and men would hardly be likely to opt for the low-income jobs that were traditionally reserved for women.

42. In response to a question by Mr. Muterahejuru on the role of human rights thinking in the context of development cooperation, she said that a more general awareness of human rights questions had led to a more analytical

approach where human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, were concerned. Finland's approach was to support genuine development, of which human rights were, of course, a component. Special guidelines existed on aid projects in the social field, intended, inter alia, to promote the role of women in development.

43. Turning to the situation of the elderly, she said that in Finland the 65 to 80 age group was perceived as a resource for society, rather than as a problem. Elderly people represented a growing proportion of the population, and they participated increasingly in political activity. A political party set up to further the interests of the elderly had met with little success; but there had recently been sizeable demonstrations by elderly people in response to the current economic crisis. The cultural centres in the larger cities were very popular among the elderly. Theatres and cultural events offered special prices for the elderly, many of whom lived on small pensions.

44. Ms. POHJANVIRTA, responding to Mr. Rattray's question about the apparent discrepancy between the number of places available per applicant in higher education and the low percentage of university entrants, said that the former figure was calculated on the basis of those leaving general education, and of places available in vocational institutions and universities taken together. Only 16,000 places were available in universities annually, while there were 80,000 applicants for those places, 15,000 of whom were older applicants seeking to become mature students. As for the reasons for the high drop-out rate, no breakdown by minority groups was available. Her delegation would try to provide additional information on a breakdown by sexes at a later date.

45. Students were selected by means of an entrance examination. Provision was made for a quota of Sami students at the universities of Oulu, Lapland and Helsinki. Oulu University ran courses for Sami wishing to become teachers in Sami comprehensive schools. In 1990, 55.8 per cent of new university students had been women, a trend attributable to the fact that girls tended to prefer to study languages and cultural subjects, and thus gravitated to the upper secondary schools, where they accounted for two thirds of the student population; while boys tended to concentrate on a more vocational education. Of the total university population of 113,000, 51.4 per cent were women.

46. The expansion of State universities and concomitant contraction of private universities, which ran counter to world trends, was attributable to financial considerations. The prosperous 1970s and 1980s had seen an enormous expansion in the university sector. Recently, however, the private universities had been unable to compete with the State-funded universities. In that regard, she stressed that, although funded by the State, the State universities took their own decisions regarding student intake and curriculum.

47. The very small number of private comprehensive schools suggested that there was little demand for them, and that the State education was generally regarded as satisfactory. However, parents had the right to take their children away from State schools. Children taught at home were tested each year by officials, to ensure that they were receiving a proper education. Recently, a number of Steiner schools had been set up. An act of January 1991 made formal provision for the establishment of private schools, which, upon

conclusion of an agreement between the school association and the municipality, would become eligible for State and municipal aid, and at which children could then be educated free of charge. Sami teachers were trained at Oulu, along with Finnish-speaking teachers. In addition, under a very successful recent cooperation scheme, nine trainees of Finnish nationality had attended the Norwegian Sami teaching training university the previous year. The status of the Sami language was rising since the entry into force of an act authorizing its use before authorities and courts in Sami-speaking districts, and in the light of the many opportunities that existed to study it in school. Much had been done to protect the language and to promote consciousness of Sami identity.

48. On the question of whether sufficient scholarships existed to finance studies abroad, she said that the financial aid made available for studies in Finland could also be used to finance studies abroad. The policy was to encourage all university students to spend at least half of one university year abroad, and exchange schemes in that regard had been established with France, and especially with the United Kingdom.

49. With regard to the allocation of State grants, she said that money was allocated to education, health and social services and that the highest State grant, which used to be 60 per cent was currently 86 per cent. As far as education was concerned, it was always to the financial advantage of municipalities in regions which attracted the maximum grant to establish new teaching posts. Such anomalies were one reason why the whole grant system was being changed. After the passage of a bill currently before the Finnish Parliament, it was anticipated that municipalities would have greater freedom of action in respect of State grants which would reflect a democratic perception of local priorities.

50. She had been asked for more information about special schools and groups. Severely physically disabled children, the blind and deaf were educated in special State-owned schools, numbering nine in all and catering for about 500 children. Such schools still came under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, while all other groups came under the Ministry of Education. The goal was to integrate disabled children into normal schools and many teaching assistants had been taken on to help them to attend such schools.

51. With regard to foreign children, she noted that whereas earlier there had been about 20,000 permanent foreign residents in Finland, in 1990 alone there had been an increase of 14,000. Foreign children had equal rights with nationals to attend every type of school and university. In comprehensive and upper secondary schools, foreign children received extra remedial teaching as necessary, especially in the Finnish language. Recently, children with a foreign mother tongue had the right to two hours' tuition per week in that language in comprehensive and upper secondary schools, provided that a group of at least five pupils required tuition in any particular language. In all, 63 different foreign languages were spoken in Finland. Refugee children had a special right to comprehensive school education for one year in separate groups of at least four pupils. Otherwise, they were placed in the ordinary classes and given extra remedial teaching.

52. Her delegation had circulated to members of the Committee the Handbook on Cultural Affairs in Finland. The characteristic of Finnish cultural policy in the 1970s had been democratization at the grass-roots level. Regional networks had been established to manage theatres, museums and art galleries and regional art councils had been set up. The Council of Europe had commended Finnish methods of promoting cultural activities. For young people, there were various kinds of music schools and conservatoires, which were very popular and attended by as many as 45,000 pupils. There were also schools for the fine arts and for arts and crafts. At the end of 1991, the Government would submit to Parliament a bill on basic education in the arts. It appeared that the best way of achieving full participation in cultural activities by everyone was to concentrate on children and young people.

53. Ms. KETOKOSKI (Finland), replying to a question by Mr. Alvarez Vita, said that a country's treatment of Romanies and minorities in general was a good test of their attitude towards human rights. In Finland there had been much soul-searching about methods to help Romanies to retain their identity while facing up to the modern world - a very difficult combination to achieve. Romanies in Finland still retained their old cultural habits and were therefore a highly visible group in society. The challenge in education was to promote the identity of Romany children because there was of course discrimination, which was heightened by differences in dress. A committee had been studying a data system for Romany children and their report suggested a number of practical ways of promoting their identity at a very early stage in their existence. A few Romanies had received academic education, including university education. However, the whole group was socially very disadvantaged and up to 20 per cent lived in poor housing or were homeless. Furthermore, there was the problem of how far normal academic training undermined their sense of ethnic identity. However there were a number of Romany lawyers and other professional people who still did identify with their ethnic group. In Finland, there was an official organ, the Advisory Board for Romany Affairs, to safeguard their interests and experiments were being made in international cooperation to promote Romany culture and improve living conditions. In 1991, Finland had hosted a summer school for Romanies from all over Europe and further activities of that nature were envisaged.

54. With regard to the drug problem among young, the emphasis in Nordic countries had been on prevention by ensuring good living conditions. In Finland, the main problem was alcohol and an act had recently been passed placing limitations on publicity for alcoholic drinks. The increasing participation of young people in activities related to the environment was a promising sign, since the main solution was to provide them with other interests.

55. A question had been asked about the protection of the works of authors and composers: Finland was a party to the international conventions on Copyright and the work of all creative artists without distinction of nationality was protected. There was also a centre of studies against reprographic piracy (E/1990/7/Add.1, Section C, para. 6). The problem was not a serious one in Finland, which was a small society with a well organized commercial system.

56. Ms. POHJANVIRTA (Finland) said that a question had been asked about the teaching of the history of religion and ethics instead of religious instruction (E/1990/7/Add.1, Section J, para. 2). The subject had developed into a course on the philosophy of life. Groups of a minimum of three pupils not belonging to any religious community had a right to take that subject in school.

57. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Finnish delegation for answering the Committee's questions. The Committee had thus completed its consideration of the report of Finland (E/1990/7/Add.1); it would proceed to formulate its concluding observations, which would be communicated to the Finnish delegation in due course.

58. Ms. Ketokoski and Ms. Pohjanvirta (Finland) withdrew.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.